



# **Helping All Children to Read – The Federal Role in Supporting Reading Reform**

**Presentation for Montana Reading Excellence Videoconference  
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Education**

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**U.S. Department of Education**



# Overview and introductory remarks

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- Background – Reading Excellence Program (REA)
- Why Congress is supporting programs to reform early reading instruction.
- What is scientifically based reading research? How do you judge research quality?
- What's the nature of the reading reforms?
- What's coming up – Reading First.



# Background

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- Reading Excellence Act program (REA) – competitive grants to states.
- K-3 reading reform along with “feeder” preschools.
- Specific program content is mandated.
- Programs and strategies must be based on scientifically based reading research.

# Reading Excellence Grants – 40 States in 2001



REA grantees = dark color  
Non-REA = no color

# REA states, districts and schools -- current status

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- ❖ 40 grantee states
  - 17 started in August 1999
  - 10 started in August 2000
  - 13 just got an award – August 2001
- ❖ More than 600 districts
- ❖ More than 1400 schools
- ❖ \$721,900,000 in active funding to improve reading instruction in schools and classrooms





# Program purposes, from Reading Excellence Act (REA)

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## Purposes

1. Teach every child to read by the end of third grade.
2. Improve reading instruction through the use of findings from scientifically-based reading research.
3. Provide early intervention to children experiencing reading difficulties and prevent inappropriate referral to special education.
4. Provide children in early childhood with the readiness skills they need to learn to read once they enter school.
5. Expand the number of high quality family literacy programs.



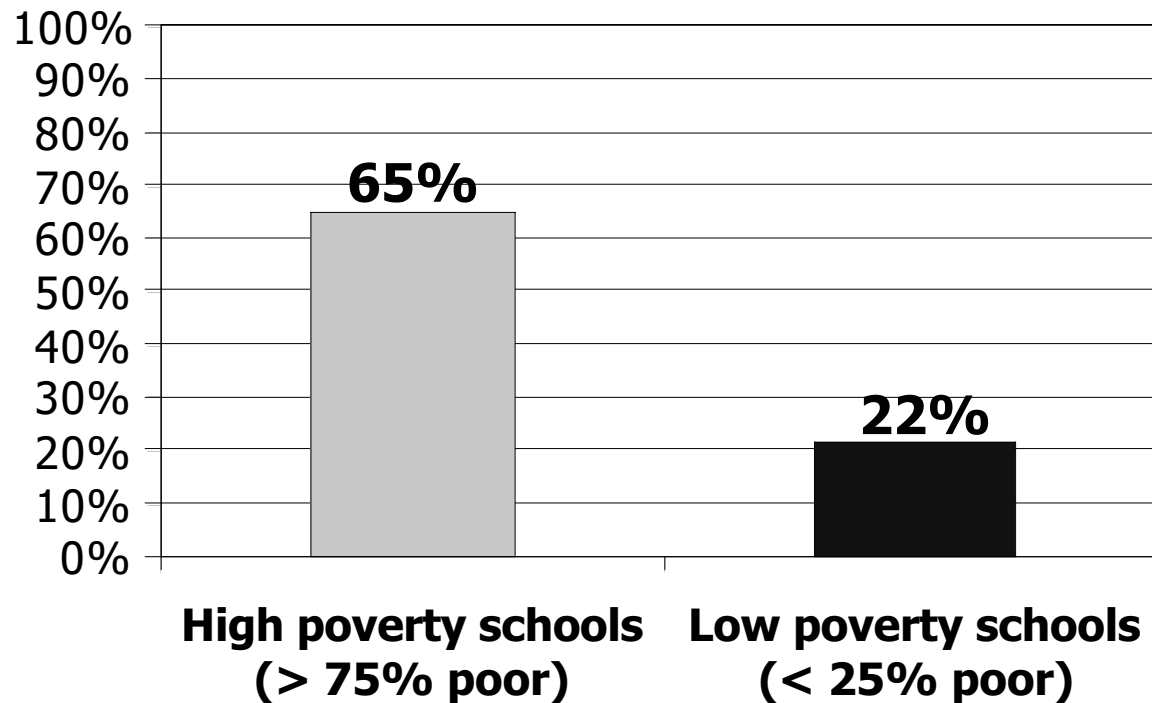
# Why REA?

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- Too many children in high poverty schools fail to learn to read.
- Knowledge about a substantial, cumulative body of research on reading -- based on scientific methodology – became available.
  - Research findings cumulated during the 1980s and 1990s; and findings converged in key studies – in some areas -- by the mid-1990s.
  - Two major syntheses provided direction for federal policy – Preventing Reading Difficulties (1998) and National Reading Panel report (2000).

# Most children in high poverty schools cannot read at the NAEP basic level

**National Assessment of Educational Progress  
Fourth Grade Reading – 2000**  
Special analysis, NCES







## Research: new syntheses

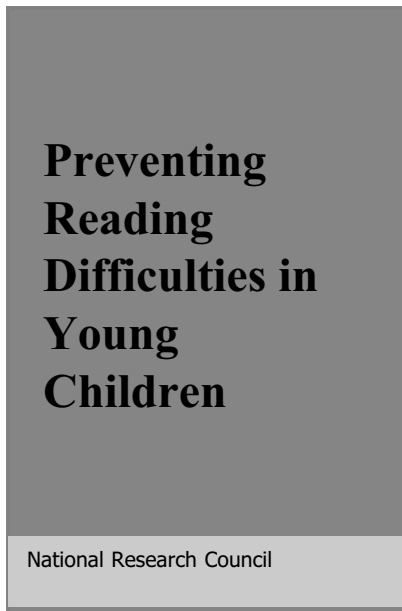
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- Authoritative syntheses of this research are found in:
  - ***Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children***  
(National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council - Catherine E. Snow, M. Susan Burns, and Peg Griffin, eds., 1998)
  - ***Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and its Implications for Reading Instruction*** - National Reading Panel (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, April 2000)



# Expert review of reading research for children at-risk

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*Preventing Reading Difficulties  
in Young Children*

Catherine E. Snow, M. Susan  
Burns, and Peg Griffin, Editors

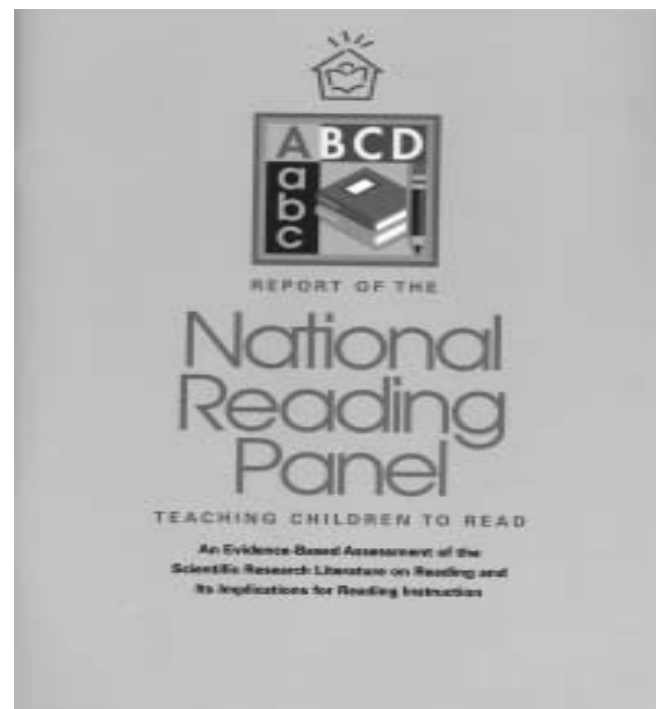
National Research Council, 1998

(Purchase from from National Academy  
of Sciences or bookstore)

# Evidence-based review

- Alphabetics
  - Phonemic awareness
  - Phonics instruction
- Fluency
- Comprehension
  - Vocabulary
  - Comprehension strategies
- Teacher education
- Computer technology

Summary report, full report, and/or video:  
For up to 500 copies, free, call  
1-877-4-ED-PUBS (1-877-433-7827)



# ***Put Reading First***

**Teacher and parent guides based on the National Reading Panel report**



- *Put Reading First: Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read* (teachers guide)
- *Put Reading First: Helping Your Child Learn to Read* (parent's brochure)



For up to 500 copies, free, call  
1-877-4-ED-PUBS (1-877-433-7827)



## Other resources

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- *Every Child Reading: A Professional Development Guide*
  - (Purchase from Learning First Alliance or ASCD)
- *Every Child Reading: An Action Plan*
  - (Purchase from Learning First Alliance or ASCD)
- *Starting Out Right*
  - (Purchase from National Academy of Sciences or bookstore)



# Scientifically based reading research

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*The application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and reading difficulties.*

Reading Excellence Act, Section 2252



# Criteria for judging research findings

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- What was the source? Were results published in a peer-reviewed/refereed journal or reviewed by a panel of independent experts in an objective and scientific review?
- Was the research high quality? Did it use rigorous, systematic, and empirical methods?
  - Consistent with scientific theory?
  - Used experimental design or high quality quasi-experimental?
  - Used standardized tests?
  - Gains sustained over time?
  - Appropriate data analysis methods?
- Large-scale? Were the findings tested with a substantial number of children? In a large single study in a number of schools or replicated in different studies (or both)?



## Ways to describe research findings

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*Is the research -*

- *Conclusive?*
- *Strongly suggestive?*
- *Promising?*





# Classroom reading reform

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Comprehensive reading instruction in the following components:

- Phonemic awareness - the skills and knowledge to understand how phonemes, or speech sounds, are connected to print
- Ability to decode unfamiliar words
- Ability to read fluently
- Background information and vocabulary to foster reading comprehension
- Comprehension - the development of appropriate active strategies to construct meaning from print
- Development and maintenance of a motivation to read



## **Classroom: Changes in teacher practice**

### **-- some findings from the NRP report and *Put Reading First***

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#### ■ Phonemic awareness –

- Can be taught and learned.
- Is essential for effective reading development and helpful for spelling.
- Involves working with individual speech sounds (phonemes) – isolating them, categorizing them, blending them, and so on.
- It is particularly important to cover blending and segmenting in instruction. Writing also strengthens phonemic awareness.
- Works best in small group instruction.
- About 10 minutes a day and about 20 hours total should be enough.
- Starts in kindergarten or preschool.



## **Classroom: Changes in teacher practice**

### **-- some findings from the NRP report and *Put Reading First***

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#### ■ Phonics –

- Needs to be explicitly and systematically taught, starting in kindergarten or no later than first grade.
- Is direct teaching of letter-sound relationships and larger unit in a planned sequence.
- Lessons need to be applied in reading words, sentences, and stories and in writing.
- It is not an entire reading program.
- About two years is usually enough – K-1 or 1-2.
- The strongest form of phonics instruction is synthetic phonics, although there is support for analytic and analogy-based. Embedded phonics doesn't work.
- Decodable text can be very helpful with early readers. There are better books out now using it.



## **Classroom: Changes in teacher practice**

### **-- some findings from the NRP report and *Put Reading First***

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#### ■ Fluency –

- Is quick, accurate, and expressive reading.
- Provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension.
- Develops over time and with practice.
- There is a close, positive relationship between fluency and comprehension test scores.
- Typical instructional approaches: teacher modeling, repeated and monitored oral reading, and independent silent reading. *Research support is available for the first and second, but not the third.* Need to focus classroom instruction more on monitored reading and use homework time for independent reading.



## **Classroom: Changes in teacher practice**

### **-- some findings from the NRP report and *Put Reading First***

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#### ■ Vocabulary –

- Is a key difference between middle class and at risk children.
- Need indirect and direct instruction to learn word meanings.
- Need rich conversation, adult reading aloud to children, and encouragement to read extensively and widely on own.
- However, also need direct instruction in specific word meanings and word learning strategies.
- Develop “word consciousness.”
- Repeated exposure.



## **Classroom: Changes in teacher practice**

### **-- some findings from the NRP report and *Put Reading First***

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- Text comprehension strategies:
  - Explicit instruction of strategies improves comprehension.
  - *Essential that teachers be able to ask strategic questions – a difficult skill for some.*
  - Include: self-monitoring of comprehension, using graphic and semantic organizers, answering questions, generating questions, recognizing story structure, and summarizing.
- Effective teacher instruction of strategies involves:
  - Direct explanation of why a strategy helps and when to use it.
  - Modeling by the teacher.
  - Guided practice.
  - Application.
- Cooperative learning can be helpful, with students working together to understand texts.
- Starts in kindergarten. Beginning readers should learn that the purpose of reading is comprehension.



# Classroom: Changes in teacher practice – assessment of reading development

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## ■ Different purposes for assessment –

- Accountability – for example, a state mandated 4<sup>th</sup>-grade standardized test. Usually universal – all children. *Purpose: to ensure schooling quality and describe education in the state.*
- Program evaluation – testing to determine student outcomes in relation to specific program changes. Can use sampling. *Purpose: to judge program quality.*
- ☆ • Student progress – testing by teachers or other school personnel to review children's progress during the year. *Purpose: to evaluate instruction so far and plan next steps and for accountability.*
- ☆ • Diagnostic and screening – testing by teachers or other school personnel to identify current strengths and gaps in a child's reading to identify need for help and grouping. *Purpose: to plan instruction.*

*Note: It is unlikely that one test can meet all of these purposes.*



## **Classroom: Changes in teacher practice – assessment of reading development**

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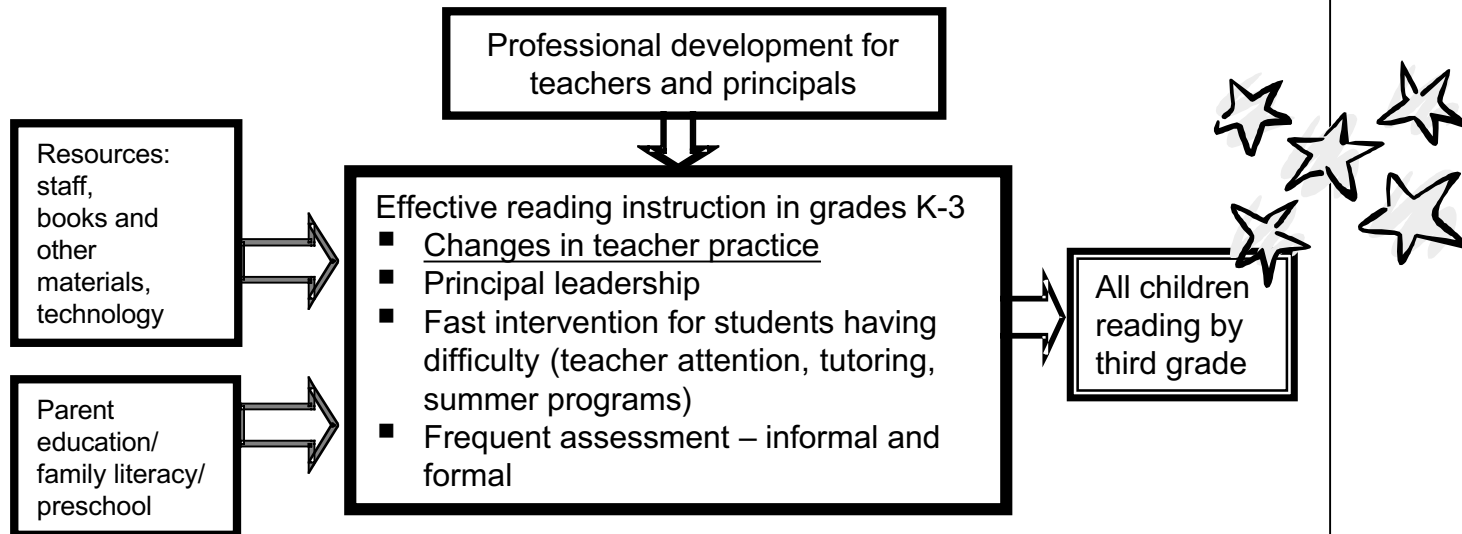
- **Start early** – It is important to start in kindergarten to test for diagnostics and student progress, so can plan reading instruction for each individual child – all the way through reading development.
- **Comprehensive** -- Need to cover key aspects of the six dimensions of reading, as appropriate for each child.
- **Frequent** – Teachers need to informally assess their children all through the year. More formal assessments are needed at least in the fall and spring to chart overall progress.



# District and school reform

Intensive, whole school reform of K-3 reading

## Theory of action model/logic model for REA local program/





# State/district/school: professional development for reading reform

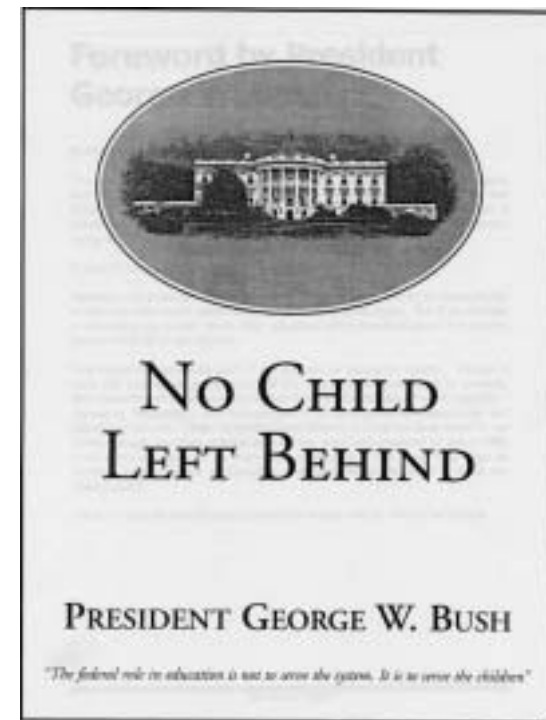
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Good professional development --

- Focuses on content – teaches research-based reading components and assessment techniques.
- Supports active learning by teachers – not just book-learning but many opportunities for practice and reflection.
- Is given over time – both in number of hours and time span over the year.
- Provides for collective participation -- all the teachers in a grade or grades at a school, or all the principals in a set of schools, or all the staff at one school.
- Is provided in a variety of ways – intensive summer workshop, school-year shorter workshops and sessions, grad courses, coaching by reading specialists, teacher study groups, etc.

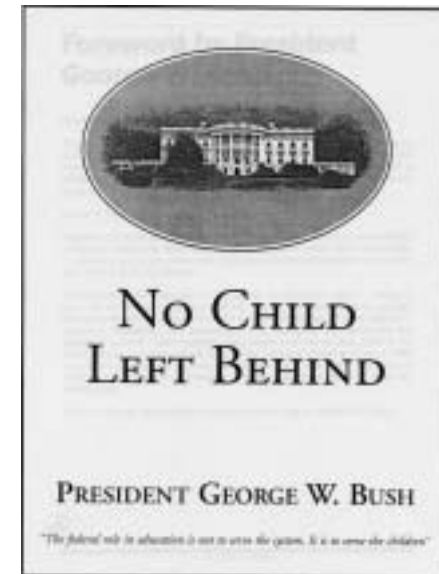
# New reading program

- *Reading First*: Federal support for implementing scientifically based reading instruction in grades K-3.
- Support for assessment -- screening, diagnosis, instruction, evaluation.
- \$900 million a year.
- Six-year formula grant to SEA which in turn competes to local districts for local "turn-around" projects.
- SEA's application still must pass an expert review panel.



# New early reading program

- *Early Reading First.* \$75 million a year in competitive discretionary grants for preschool reform.
- Eligible applicants:
  - School districts that are eligible to participate in Reading First.
  - Private or public organizations acting on behalf of preschool programs located in a school district eligible for Reading First.
- Projects must provide high quality oral language and literature-rich environments for acquiring language and pre-reading skills.
- All activities must be based on scientifically based reading research.
- Grants can be up to six years.





# **Reading Excellence contact information**

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## **U.S. Department of Education: Reading Excellence Program**

- **phone: (202) 401-1121**
- **fax: (202) 260-8969**
- **e-mail: [reading.excellence@ed.gov](mailto:reading.excellence@ed.gov)**
- **REA website:  
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/REA/>**